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7 May 1968

NRO and JCS review(s) completed.

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director
The Deputy Director
Mr. Bross, D/NIPE
Mr. Duckett, DD/S&T
25X1 [redacted], Chairman SIGNIT/Watch Committees
CIA Member, COMIREX
25X1 Mr. Karamessines, DDP
[redacted] C/FE
SUBJECT : DOD Reconnaissance Paper

1. The attached papers were tabled at the 7 May Bundy Committee meeting by the Department of Defense. As you will note, the bulk of this material is substantially similar to the earlier JRC draft circulated by my memorandum of 1 May.

2. At the 7 May meeting, I explicitly reserved the Agency's position on these papers, noting that an official Agency comment could not be made until we had had a chance to look at them and the Director had had time to consider his position.

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3. [redacted] has shown me the 7 May Memorandum for the United States Intelligence Board prepared by COMIREX on "overhead imagery reconnaissance of North Vietnam during a truce" (COMIREX-D-25.3/3) and the proposed briefing memorandum for Admiral Taylor in his capacity as the CIA member of USIB. These COMIREX papers deal most adequately with the requirements question but, by design, do not address themselves to the problem of high level versus low level reconnaissance or the question of the optimum high level manned vehicle -- matters better handled in different channels.

4. The attached DOD papers, which have not been formally considered by the Joint Chiefs or reviewed by Secretary Clifford, do discuss a high level-

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low level issue and assume that the only available high level flying photographic platforms are the SR71, the U-2 and the "H" model photographic drone.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

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Mr. Casper

5/6/68

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RECONNAISSANCE OF NORTH VIETNAM

A. U.S. Position and Objectives*

1. In order to assure ourselves that North Vietnam is not taking advantage of a cessation of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, the U.S. must continue high level aerial reconnaissance over North Vietnam.

2. Consideration will be given to lower level reconnaissance over North Vietnam if there is:

a. A pattern of evidence over time such as to raise the question of North Vietnam's taking advantage, and thus requiring more detailed verification, or

b. Prolonged bad weather which prevents high level reconnaissance, thus seriously impairing the quality of needed intelligence.

3. In the event of a pattern of suspicious targets or prolonged bad weather, there will be requests for lower level reconnaissance. Such requests should be forwarded to Washington for determination by the "303 Committee" in consultation with Mr. Harriman and Mr. Vance.

B. North Vietnam's Likely Position on Reconnaissance

1. Only recently, Hanoi included reconnaissance in its definition of "all other acts of war." Since Hanoi has not been pressing this issue all along, it is likely that Hanoi will either not bring up the issue of

* The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that reconnaissance should be authorized as necessary to cover the targets. Priority should be given to high altitude recce, but lower level recce should be continued as required, without case by case approval in Washington.

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U.S. reconnaissance over North Vietnam at all during the negotiations or, if it does bring the matter up, it will not be a striking point.

2.. We cannot, of course, dismiss the probability that Hanoi will be insistent on the cessation of all U.S. aerial reconnaissance. Hanoi is very sensitive on issues concerning its sovereignty and may make an issue of a reconnaissance.

C. The U.S. Negotiating Position

1. The U.S. should not raise the issue of aerial reconnaissance with North Vietnam at the negotiating table, nor should we seek explicit North Vietnam agreement on this subject.

2. If North Vietnam raises the issue, the U.S. should indicate its strong intention to continue to fly reconnaissance missions.

a. We should state that such reconnaissance is necessary to:

(1) inspect "no advantage," and

(2) dissipate rumors of violation that might endanger the negotiations.

3. We should not raise the issue of lower level reconnaissance at all. In the event that lower level reconnaissance is necessary and North Vietnam raises objections to it, we should deal with the objections on an ad hoc basis.

SUBJECT: Current Photographic Reconnaissance Operations of North Vietnam

1. Current photographic reconnaissance operations over North Vietnam are as follows:

a. South of 20 degrees North Latitude: Unrestricted.

b. North of 20 degrees North Latitude:

(1) Weekly coverage of the main lines of communications, ports, supply depots, railheads, and air defense sites and missile defenses.

(2) Semi-weekly coverage of Routes 1 and 15, Phuc Yen, Kep, Hanoi Gia Lam, Hanoi Bac Mai, Yen Bai, and Haiphong Cat Bi airfields.

2. To accomplish the reconnaissance objectives listed above, the following operations are authorized:

a. Up to five low altitude sorties per week by low altitude 147-S photographic drones. More than one sortie may be flown on a single day.

b. Up to four high altitude sorties per week on an irregular schedule using the 147-H high altitude photographic drones.

c. Flights by the SR-71 aircraft as weather permits.

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SUBJECT: Proposed Plan for Post-Truce Reconnaissance of North Vietnam

REQUIREMENT:

1. If the United States and North Vietnam enter into a truce agreement, the US must ensure that NVN does not take advantage of a truce period to endanger the security of Free World Military Forces or of Vietnamese civilians by the introduction of new or improved military capabilities, redeployment of forces, or preparation for a surprise offensive.

2. While certain political guarantees might be offered or truce commissions invoked as means of policing the truce, past experience has shown that only reconnaissance operations provide an acceptable means of assuring compliance with truce provisions.

3. The extent and frequency of airborne imagery reconnaissance directed against North Vietnam during a "cease fire" or truce period, must be consistent with our needs to detect four major categories of activity:

a. Logistical support to, and build-up of communist forces throughout North Vietnam and in the DMZ.

b. Introduction into North Vietnam of new offensive weapons or other advanced systems.

c. Introduction of forces from other allies of NVN.

d. Compliance with specialized provisions of any truce agreement. Included in this latter category might be the phased withdrawal of units and/or weapons, the dismantling of military facilities or emplacements or the monitoring of agreed levels of sea and rail transport activities into and out of North Vietnam.

4. A review of the reconnaissance means available, the target areas which require coverage, and the various factors which might affect agreement on the use of reconnaissance assets to police the truce is provided below.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. Discussions during truce negotiations will include the subject of policing the truce.

2. NVN negotiators will probably oppose any policing activities although they may assume a fallback position of agreeing to limited reconnaissance provided the reconnaissance platforms are unarmed and not very apparent.

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3. It is likely that three possible conditions will be considered:
 - a. CONDITION I: Permissive Atmosphere - Low level unarmed reconnaissance permitted throughout NVN.
 - b. CONDITION II: Permissive Atmosphere - High altitude unarmed reconnaissance vehicles permitted over NVN.
 - c. CONDITION III: Non-permissive atmosphere - No overflight of NVN permitted. Active air defense against all overflights.
4. No restrictions will be placed on aerial or surface reconnaissance vehicles on or over international waters or other countries such as SNV, Laos and Cambodia.

DISCUSSION:

1. Photo reconnaissance of NVN may be accomplished by very high flying photographic platforms such as the SR-71, the U-2, and the "H" model photographic drone. It may also be performed using lower altitude tactical reconnaissance vehicles such as the RF-8, RA-5C, RF-4C, RF-101 and the "S" model low altitude photographic drone. High/medium altitude oblique photographic coverage could be achieved using the RB-57F and/or the C-97.

2. Weather permitting, high altitude reconnaissance will provide adequate surveillance of NVN to permit assessment of NVN regenerative actions and military operations. Because they are not normally seen by the naked eye, they tend to be less incident provoking and are more acceptable to the country being surveilled. The major limiting factor to the very high altitude photo reconnaissance aircraft is cloud cover at the middle altitudes. Low flying photo platforms may be operated under this type cloud cover, however, they are more susceptible to visual sighting and attack by AAA, SAMs, and fighter aircraft. Haze which is prevalent in the area, lessens the effectiveness of oblique photography more significantly than it does vertical reconnaissance photography.

3. Photographic targets to be covered will include all border, coastal, highway, railway and waterway lines of communications in Route Package Number 1; major lines of communications, military installations, airfields, harbors and supply depots in NVN, Northeastern Laos, and 30 nautical miles into Cambodia from the South Vietnam border.

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8. Because of the prevailing weather situation over North Vietnam, the most desirable solution would be unrestricted unarmed tactical reconnaissance at low altitude. However, if negotiations can achieve agreement only for very high altitude reconnaissance, this would produce an acceptable, but less desirable solution.

9. While the SR-71 and the U-2 have the same capability for very high altitude reconnaissance operations, the U-2 is easier and less expensive to service, and produces more reliable photographic results at this time. Both aircraft can be detected on radar; however, both are normally not detected by the naked eye. They can be seen if the atmospheric conditions

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are such that contrails are produced. These atmospheric conditions can be predicted and flights programmed accordingly. The SR-71 produces an audible sonic boom which would make its presence known and might have an undesirable effect in a permissive situation. In a non-permissive atmosphere, the SR-71, because of its speed and altitude capabilities, is more survivable and, therefore, more desirable. The high altitude H-drone could be used as backup for either the U-2 or the SR-71. However, drones should be scheduled on the basis of 3 missions for each manned aircraft mission replaced.

10. Tactical reconnaissance aircraft can fly at medium or low altitude. However, such aircraft are exposed over a larger area at medium altitude and so would be obvious, to a larger segment of the civilian population. Since these planes would not be expending ordnance this greater visibility would not necessarily produce greater impact than an observable high altitude flight.

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11. Both the high altitude H-drone and the low altitude S-drone would be acceptable reconnaissance vehicles in a permissive atmosphere. However, the greater flexibility of the manned aircraft relegates both drones to the role of a substitute platform in a permissive environment. In a non-permissive atmosphere, the SR-71 would perform more efficiently and is, therefore, the first choice in this case. However, the high altitude H-drone could be used as a back-up for the SR-71, and the low altitude drone could be used to investigate areas in which high altitude photography indicates a need for closer investigation.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Low altitude unarmed manned reconnaissance would produce the most effective results.
2. High altitude manned reconnaissance flights would produce acceptable results but should be backed up by high altitude drones.
3. The U-2 is the most desirable high altitude platform in a permissive atmosphere while the SR-71 is more desirable in a non-permissive atmosphere.

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4. Oblique photography would provide some measure of capability should overflight be denied but because of haze and inherent limitations on its range, its marginally acceptable results would be confined to the coastal/ border areas.

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6. Maintenance considerations, exposure, detection, and survivability favor the following priorities for equipments and altitude selection for photo reconnaissance:

a. Permissive:

- (1) Low Altitude - Tactical Aircraft
- (2) High Altitude - U-2
- (3) High or Low Altitude Drone

b. Non-Permissive:

- (1) High Altitude - SR-71
- (2) High Altitude - Drone
- (3) Low Altitude Drone
- (4) Oblique Photography

5 Attachments

Annex A - Aircraft Capabilities
Annex B - Recommended Platforms
Annex C - Weather Conditions
Annex D - Target Coverage
Annex E - Weekly Mission Rate

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ANNEX D TO APPENDIX

RECOMMENDED TARGET COVERAGE

1. The extent and frequency of airborne imagery reconnaissance directed against North Vietnam during a "cease fire" or truce period, must be consistent with our needs to detect four major categories of activity:

- a. Logistical support to, and buildup of communist forces throughout North Vietnam and in the DMZ.
- b. Introduction into North Vietnam of new offensive weapons or other advanced systems.
- c. Third party involvement.
- d. Compliance with specified provisions of any truce agreement.

Included in this latter category would be the phased withdrawal of units or weapons, the dismantling of military facilities or emplacements, and the monitoring of agreed levels of sea and rail transport activities into and out of North Vietnam.

2. It is essential that airborne imagery reconnaissance be conducted over North Vietnam against designated target structures at the attendant frequencies as follows:

- a. In order to determine to what extent the enemy uses the period of negotiation to improve his military posture, it is necessary to maintain near daily coverage of selected key indicator targets and the DMZ.
- b. For the same reasons, it is necessary to maintain at least weekly coverage of selected highways, railways and border areas of the Panhandle south of 20 degrees north.

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c. It is also necessary to obtain weekly coverage of selected high priority railyards and ports in the northern segment of North Vietnam which could give pre-operational evidence of the introduction of surface-to-surface missiles or other advanced weapons systems into North Vietnam.

d. At least weekly coverage of active surface-to-air missile sites is required to permit maintenance of an intelligence base concerning the posture of North Vietnamese defensive capabilities.

e. For the remainder of North Vietnam, at least twice monthly coverage of military and logistical targets to support intelligence assessments of the nature and extent of any buildup in other areas of North Vietnam.

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